



Town of Colchester, Vermont
Monday, March 6, 2017 Annual Town Meeting and
Tuesday, March 7, 2017 Australian Ballot Vote

February 2, 2017

Dear Resident and Taxpayer:

Enclosed is information about the Town of Colchester's Annual Town Meeting Monday, March 6, 2017 and items to be voted on by private (Australian) ballot on Tuesday, March 7, 2017 from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM at Colchester High School. Early voting available by February 15 at the Town Clerk's office and by mail: See page 3 of this insert for details!

Voting Information

- ⇒ Voting is at the Colchester High School on 131 Laker Lane, off Blakely Rd. for **both Districts 9-1 and 9-2**. Early voting also available at the Town Clerk's office and online.
- ⇒ **District 9-1** is comprised of the area east of I-89, the west side of I-89 north of the Malletts Creek inlet and excluding the south side of Blakely Road.
- ⇒ **District 9-2** is comprised of the area west of I-89 south of the Malletts Creek inlet, including the south side of Blakely Road.

Ballot Items

There are nine articles to be voted on by ballot this year: one is the Town's general operating fund budget and the other eight are related to the Town Charter.

Summary of Proposed Changes to the Town Charter

- Remove Grand Juror as an elected officer
- Require Selectboard policies be published online
- Change the threshold for emergency appropriations from 2 to 4 percent following an opportunity for public comment (for emergency expenditures only.)
- Add statutory language to the appointment of the Town Manager; include the enforcement of Town Ordinances to the powers and duties of the Town Manager or his/her designee; and for removing Town Manager with just cause
- Add clarification language to the preparation and submission of the budget and to the timing of a revote on a rejected budget
- New section to require multi-year capital plans and voter-approved capital budgets to follow the provisions of state statute
- Additional language in a new Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest section to include elected officials and appointees and a new section requiring the periodic review and adoption of the Conflict of Interest Policy
- New section requiring the review of the charter every 5 years

These proposed changes are posted in their entirety on our website (www.colchestervt.gov) with hard copies available at the Town Clerk's office and Burnham Library.
Questions? Contact the Town Clerk's Office at 264-5525.

Other Important Items on the Ballot

Town Elected Positions Including:

- **Selectboard, 2 Year**, currently held by Marc Landry
- **Selectboard, 3 Year**, currently held by Herb Downing
- **Moderator, 1 Year**, currently held by Scott Barrett
- **School Board, 2 Year**, currently held by Curt Taylor
- **School Board, 3 Year**, currently held by James Lincoln White
- **Library Trustee, 5 Year**, currently held by Betsy Ferry
- **Lister, 3 Year**, currently held by Hugh Bemis
- **Town Clerk/Treasurer, 2 years**, currently held by Karen Richard

Town Budget

The proposed FY 18 budget maintains our current level of service while recognizing we have had an increase in service demands and operational costs caused by slow, steady growth over the past decade.

We are pleased to share with you that over the past fiscal year we have eliminated one area and reduced seven of the twenty-six categories of our operating budget.

With an estimated 1.14% growth in the Grand List, the estimated municipal tax rate for 2017-2018 is \$0.5473. This is an increase of 1/3 of one cent or a 0.62% increase over the prior year **and is lower than six years ago**.

The Selectboard and staff thank you for the opportunity to serve you and we encourage you to attend Town Meeting on Monday, March 6 and vote on or before Tuesday, March 7, 2017.

Colchester Selectboard

Nadine Scibek, Chair

Herbert Downing, Vice Chair

Tom Mulcahy, Clerk

Marc Landry

Jeffrey D. Bartley

Dawn H. Francis, Town Manager



Community Dinner
Monday, March 6, 2017
5:30 P.M.
Colchester High School Cafeteria



The Selectboard and School Board will be hosting the annual free community dinner before Town Meeting. Come join the Town staff, Selectboard members and your Legislators for dinner, news from Montpelier and a discussion of local issues in an informal setting.

Please bring a potluck dessert to share. The Annual Meeting will follow in the high school auditorium at 7:00 P.M.

WARNING
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
March 6, 2017, 7:00 PM
VOTE BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT
Tuesday, March 7, 2017, 7:00 AM - 7:00 PM
COLCHESTER, VERMONT

The legal voters of the Town of Colchester, Vermont are notified and warned to meet at the Colchester High School Auditorium, Laker Lane, in said Town on Monday, March 6, 2017, at 7:00 PM to act on the following articles not involving voting by Australian ballot (Articles 1-5):

ARTICLE 1

To choose a moderator, if elected moderator is not present.

ARTICLE 2

To act on reports of the Town Officers.

ARTICLE 3

To set compensation, if any, to be paid to the Selectboard.

ARTICLE 4

To transact any other business proper to come before said meeting.

ARTICLE 5

To adjourn said meeting and to reconvene at the Colchester High School, Laker Lane, in said Town on Tuesday, March 7, 2017, for voters in District 9-1 and District 9-2 to vote for Town Officers and to transact any other business involving voting by Australian Ballot with voting to begin at 7:00 a.m. and to close at 7:00 p.m.

Absentee ballots may be requested until 4:00 p.m. on Monday, March 6, 2017, by calling the Town Clerk's Office at (802) 264-5520.

ARTICLE 6

"Shall the voters of the Town of Colchester approve total general fund expenditures of twelve million, four hundred fifty-two thousand, three hundred twenty-five dollars (\$12,452,325), of which ten million, two hundred twenty-one thousand, eight hundred seventy dollars (\$10,221,870) shall be raised by taxes and two million, two hundred thirty-four thousand, four hundred fifty-five dollars (\$2,234,455) by non-tax revenues for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018?"

ARTICLE 7

Proposed Town Charter Amendment
Re: Subchapter 2. Officers

"Shall the voters vote to amend Section 202 to eliminate the elected office of grand juror?"

The complete text of the proposed amendment is available for review

on the Town website, in each voting booth, on file for public inspection in the Town Clerk's Office, 781 Blakely Road, and available to the public upon request.

ARTICLE 8

Proposed Town Charter Amendment re: Subchapter 2. Officers

"Shall the voters vote to amend Section 207 to add the requirement of the Selectboard to publish all policy adoptions on the Town's website for ease of access by the public?"

The complete text of the proposed amendment is available for review on the Town website, in each voting booth, on file for public inspection in the Town Clerk's Office, 781 Blakely Road, and available to the public upon request.

ARTICLE 9

Proposed Town Charter Amendment
re: Subchapter 3. Town Meeting

"Shall the voters vote to amend Section 304 to change the threshold from 2 to 4 percent for emergency appropriations following an opportunity for public comment on the matter and to amend Section 607 to change the 2 percent to 4 percent to agree with Section 304; and remove redundant language that states articles requesting appropriations shall be voted by Australian ballot?"

The complete text of the proposed amendment is available for review on the Town website, in each voting booth, on file for public inspection in the Town Clerk's Office, 781 Blakely Road, and available to the public upon request.

ARTICLE 10

Proposed Town Charter Amendments
re: Subchapter 4. Town Manager

"Shall the voters vote to amend Section 401 to add the statutory reference for appointment of Town Manager; amend Section 404 to add language that the Town Manager shall keep the Selectboard informed... Including, but not limited to, regarding the enforcement of Town ordinances; and amend Section 406 to add the language that the Town Manager shall be removed by a majority of the entire Selectboard so voting upon a finding of cause for removal?"

The complete text of the proposed amendment is available for review on the Town website, in each voting booth, on file for public inspection in the Town Clerk's Office, 781 Blakely Road, and available to the public upon request.

ARTICLE 11

Proposed Town Charter Amendment re: Subchapter 6. Budget

"Shall the voters vote to amend Section 602 to add clarification language to the preparation and submission of the budget; amend Section 603 to add clarification language to the Town meeting and budget process; and amend Section 606 to add clarification language to the Departmental budget?"

The complete text of the proposed amendment is available for review on the Town website, in each voting booth, on file for public inspection in the Town Clerk's Office, 781 Blakely Road, and available to the public upon request.

ARTICLE 12

Proposed Town Charter amendment re: Subchapter 6. Budget

"Shall the voters vote to add Section 608 Capital budgeting for voter-approved funding, to require multi-year capital budgets funded through voter-approved multi-year capital plans, voter-approved agreements, voter-approved debt, or impact fees to follow the provisions of state statutes?"

The complete text of the proposed amendment is available for review on the Town website, in each voting booth, on file for public inspection in the Town Clerk's Office, 781 Blakely Road, and available to the public upon request.

ARTICLE 13

Proposed Town Charter Amendment re: Subchapter 9. Miscellaneous Provision to be renamed "Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest."

"Shall the voters vote to amend Section 901 Ethical conduct to add clarification language; and add Section 902 Conflict of Interest Policy to require publishing the policy on the Town website and the adoption and periodic review of the policy and process?"

The complete text of the proposed amendment is available for review on the Town website, in each voting booth, on file for public inspection in the Town Clerk's Office, 781 Blakely Road, and available to the public upon request.

ARTICLE 14


Town Charter Amendment re: Subchapter 10. Amendment of Charter


"Shall the voters vote to amend Section 1001 Amendment of Charter to require a review of the charter every 5 years?"

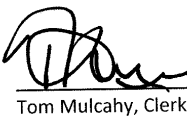
The complete text of the proposed amendment is available for review on the Town website, in each voting booth, on file for public inspection in the Town Clerk's Office, 781 Blakely Road, and available to the public upon request.

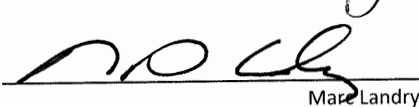
**DATED AT COLCHESTER, VERMONT
THIS 24th DAY OF JANUARY, 2017.**


Colchester Selectboard

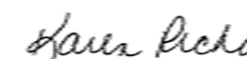

Nadine Scibek, Chair


Herbert Downing, Vice Chair


Tom Mulcahy, Clerk


Marc Landry


Jeffrey D. Bartley


Karen Richard, Town Clerk



GREAT NEWS from Vermont's Secretary of State!

Beginning January 1, 2017 eligible persons may register to vote any day **up to and including the day of the election.**

You may register during normal business hours, 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM, at the Town Clerk's office before the election and during polling hours on Election Day, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM, at Colchester High School.

You may also register to vote online at the Secretary of State's website: <https://www.olvr.sec.state.vt.us/>

Traveling Over the Winter Break? Remember to Vote Before You Go!

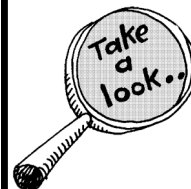
Early/Absentee voting is easy and convenient! Ballots are expected to arrive at the Town Clerk's office by February 15th. You may vote at the Town Offices during office hours (7:30 AM to 4:30 PM) until the close of business on March 6th (eve of Election Day). You may request a ballot be mailed to you (allow time for postal transit) or an authorized person may apply for an absentee ballot on your behalf. Requests can be made by phone (802-264-5520); at the Town Clerk's office; or through the Vermont's Voter Registration system at "My Voter Page" at <https://mvp.sec.state.vt.us/>.

Completed ballots should be mailed to:

Colchester Town Clerk
P.O. Box 55
Colchester, VT 05446



Or drop them off at the Town Clerk's office. If you choose to mail your completed ballot, **be sure you allow time for postal transit-the clerks are not responsible for delayed or misdirected mail.** Ballots must be returned to the Town Clerk's office by 4:30 PM on Monday, March 6, 2017. On election day absentee ballots must be returned to the polling place at the high school.



Our **95th Annual Town & School Report** has a new, easy-read format to give you important Town information fast! Hard copies will be available in mid-February at the following locations:

- The Town Offices (Clerk's and Administration)
- Burnham Library
- At the annual Town/School Meeting
- On our website at <http://colchestervt.gov/368/Town-Reports>

Town Budget Overview

The proposed FY 18 budget maintains our current services. Steady growth over the past decade has resulted in increased operation costs due to the expanded need for services. Yet we have eliminated one and reduced seven of twenty-six categories in our operating budget. Before non-tax revenues, the operating budget increase is 2.4% and comprised of:

- ⇒ 1.4% (\$174,499) to maintain current services
- ⇒ 1% (\$122,566) for additional services; these include:
 - \$39,800 for volunteer fire departments
 - \$50,000 for Public Works maintenance of Colchester's 147 miles of public highways and sidewalks; these have increased by 10% in the last 5 years
 - \$4,500 for 4 more hours per week of Library adult programming
 - \$3,400 for an additional seasonal Police Community Service Officer and \$16,000 for special programs and technology
 - \$4,000 to Special Services Transportation Agency (SSTA) for rides for seniors and persons with disabilities.

How does the Town Reduce Taxes?

By Cost Cutting:

- ⇒ **Reducing expenditures through staff restructuring, vehicle changes and energy efficiency.** For example, a change in the police fleet will reduce capital costs by \$150,000 over ten years; reduce labor costs by \$2,200 annually; and cut fuel costs by \$5,300 annually.
- ⇒ **Pursuit of grants.** Last year one-third of the Town's capital improvements were covered by \$900,000+ from grants.
- ⇒ **Sharing equipment and resources.** Colchester shares a street sweeper with Milton; Milton shares culvert thawing equipment with Colchester. We also share our Dispatch Center with Milton and they pay 40% of our dispatch costs.

By Maximizing Non-tax Revenues:

- ⇒ 18% of our general operating budget comes from non-tax revenues.
- ⇒ Service fees and non-tax revenues are up by 5.2% (\$110,030) for a total of \$2,230,455.
- ⇒ Prior year surpluses fund future services. The \$210,661 surplus from FY16 reduces FY18 taxes.

The Local Option Tax:

As of September 30, 2016 the Town has collected the local option tax for a full year. The first year's receipts totaled \$1,350,487 and served to reduce our tax rate by 5%.

So What's the Bottom Line?

The Combined Operating and Capital Budget is \$11,486,876, net of non-property tax revenues, an increase of 1.77% (\$199,423.37) over the FY17 Combined Budget. With projected 1.14% growth in the Grand List the estimated municipal tax rate for 2017-2018 is \$0.5473; an increase of **1/3 of one cent** or a 0.62% increase over the prior year **and is lower than 6 years ago..**

Find more budget info at: <http://colchestervt.gov/367/Proposed-Budget> and our annual report.

Town of Colchester Proposed FY 18 General Fund Budget

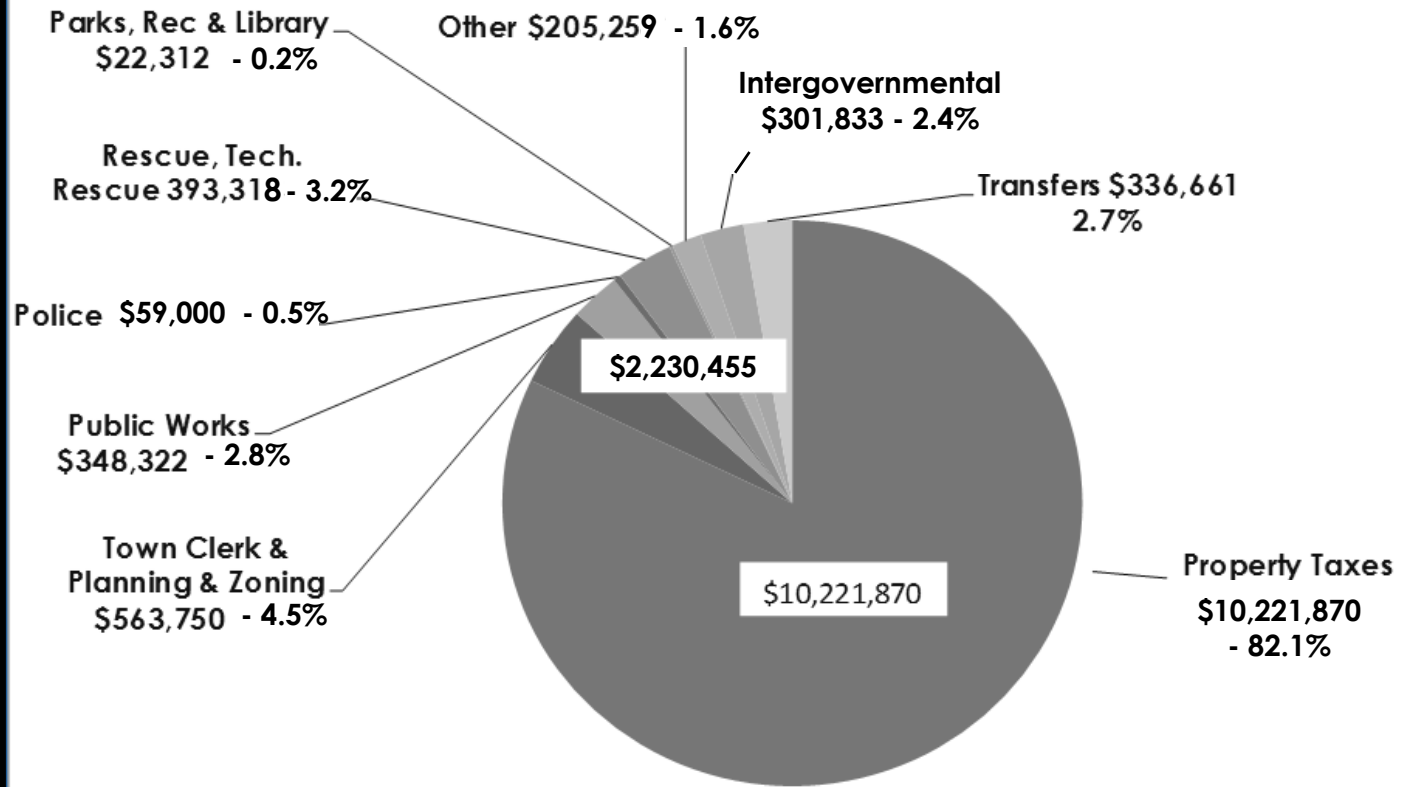
Revenues

Revenue Type	Proposed FY 18	FY 17	% Change From FY 17	\$ Change- From FY 17
Property Taxes	\$10,221,870	\$10,035,834	1.9%	\$ 186,036
Other Revenues	\$ 2,230,455	\$ 2,119,425	5.2%	\$ 111,030
Total Revenues	\$12,452,325	\$12,155,259	2.4%	\$ 297,066

Expenses

Department	Proposed FY 18	FY 17	% Change From FY 17	\$ change from FY 17
Selectboard	\$ 76,928	\$ 77,828	-1.2%	\$ (900)
Transfers	\$ 126,000	\$ 182,742	-31.1%	\$ (56,742)
Civil Board	\$ 40,706	\$ 45,228	-10.0%	\$ (4,522)
Manager	\$ 643,161	\$ 548,397	17.3%	\$ 94,764
Economic Development	\$ 124,707	\$ 126,789	-1.6%	\$ (2,082)
Finance	\$ 389,651	\$ 376,416	3.5%	\$ 13,235
Assessor	\$ 204,932	\$ 193,720	5.8%	\$ 11,212
Town Clerk	\$ 375,773	\$ 363,863	3.3%	\$ 11,910
Planning & Zoning / DRB	\$ 619,130	\$ 611,233	1.3%	\$ 7,897
Information Tech	\$ 160,713	\$ 158,957	1.1%	\$ 1,756
Police	\$ 3,641,745	\$ 3,537,453	2.9%	\$ 104,292
Dispatch	\$ 422,532	\$ 396,800	6.5%	\$ 25,732
Fire Departments	\$ 918,400	\$ 878,600	4.5%	\$ 39,800
Rescue	\$ 555,366	\$ 567,019	-2.1%	\$ (11,653)
Tech Rescue	\$ 36,080	\$ 34,140	5.7%	\$ 1,940
Public Works-Admin	\$ 610,674	\$ 594,536	2.7%	\$ 16,138
Highway	\$ 1,159,977	\$ 1,105,671	4.9%	\$ 54,306
Maintenance Facility	\$ 314,238	\$ 346,034	-9.2%	\$ (31,796)
Stormwater	\$ 210,123	\$ 206,028	2.0%	\$ 4,095
Buildings	\$ 172,056	\$ 161,479	6.6%	\$ 10,577
Health Services	\$ 58,794	\$ 57,850	1.6%	\$ 944
Parks	\$ 365,618	\$ 387,891	-5.7%	\$ (22,273)
Recreation	\$ 232,361	\$ 224,440	3.5%	\$ 7,921
Library	\$ 697,026	\$ 674,571	3.3%	\$ 22,455
Cemetery	\$ -	\$ 20,558	-100.0%	\$ (20,558)
Intergovernmental	\$ 295,632	\$ 277,016	6.7%	\$ 18,616
Total Expenses	\$12,452,325	\$12,155,259	2.4%	\$ 297,065

FY 18 General Fund Revenues



Comparison – Inner Chittenden County Town Tax Rates

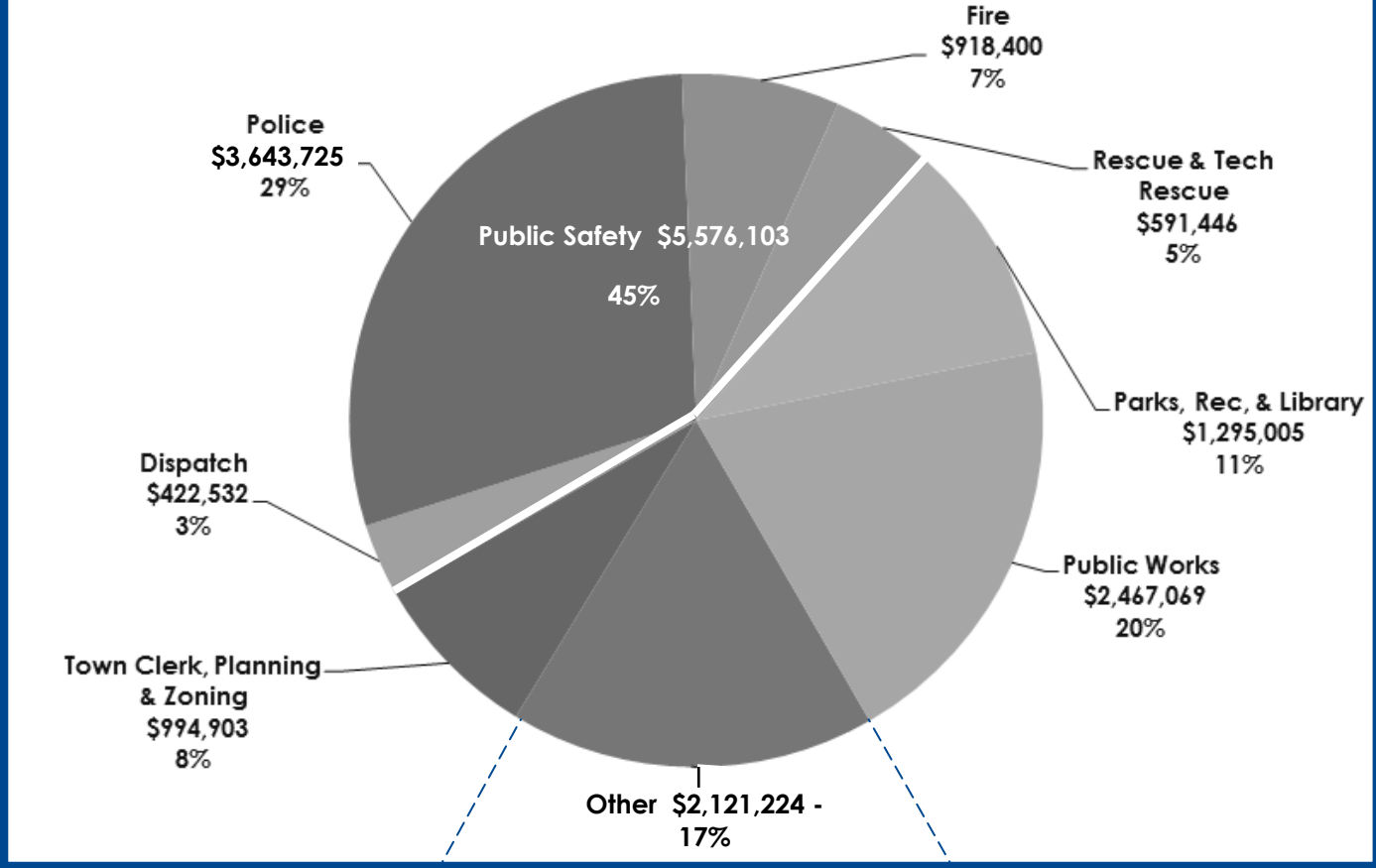
Williston	.265
So. Burlington	.4731
Essex Town	.5001
Colchester	.5440
Essex Jct.	.7964
Burlington	.7826
Winooski	1.0325
Average	.6277



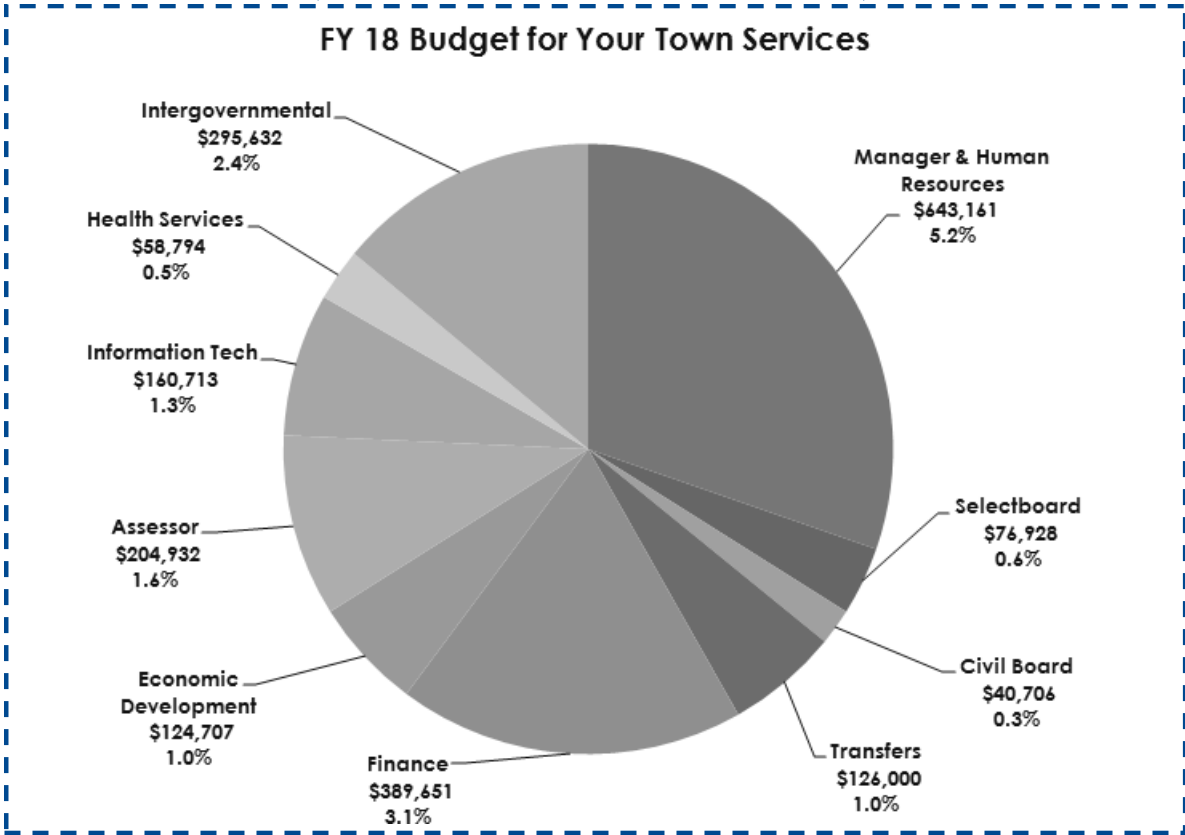
Colchester's tax rate ranks in the middle (4th) of these inner Chittenden County town tax rates and is 13% below the average tax rate.

2016-17 MUNICIPAL TAX RATES FROM TOWN LISTER/ASSESSOR'S DATA

FY18 Budget for Your Town Services



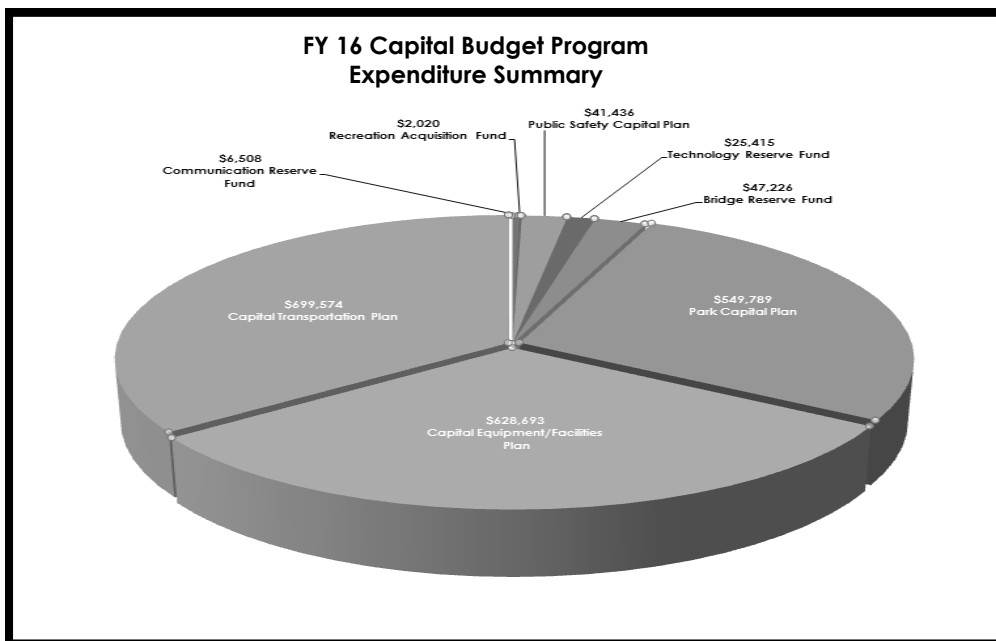
FY 18 Budget for Your Town Services



Capital Planning and Budgeting

The Town of Colchester has a Capital Budget Program that allows the Town to save in advance for most capital needs. This helps to avoid loans, debt and related interest payments. The Town has capital plans for the following categories:

- Equipment, Vehicles, and Facilities
- Parks
- Public Safety (including specialized equipment for Police, Rescue, and Technical Rescue)
- Radio Communications (for Police, Public Works/Parks, Rescue and Volunteer Fire Depts)
- Information Technology (Town-wide, including telecommunications)

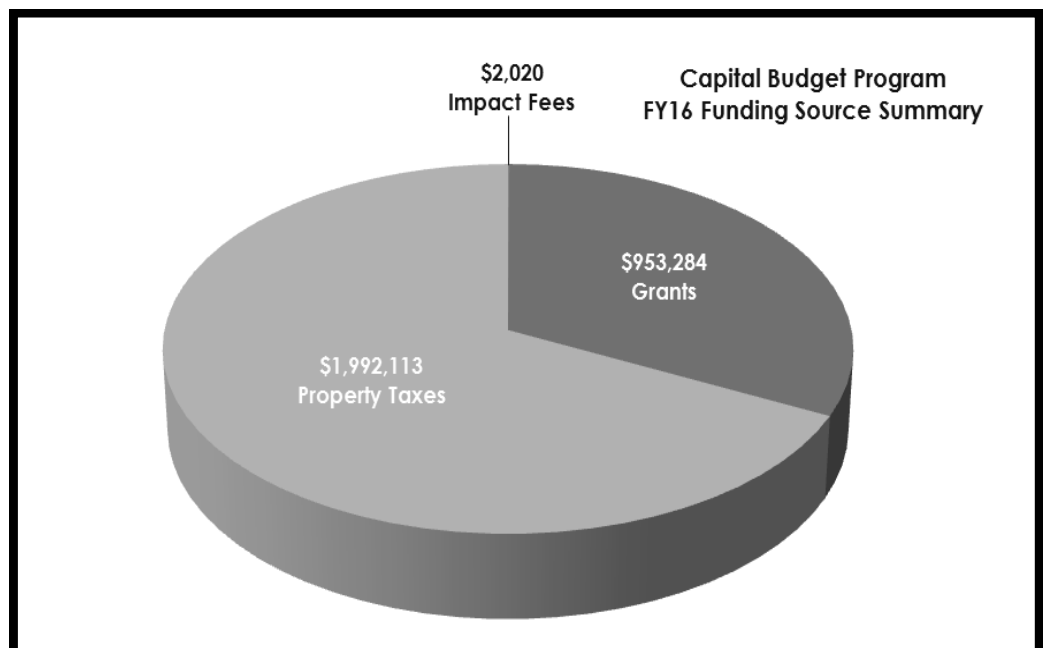


These plans will save approximately \$76,000 in interest payments over the next six years and contribute to the Town's low debt service ratio of 4.2% (other inner Chittenden County municipalities average 10%). They also position the Town to leverage significant grants funds, projected to be approximately \$3.54 million over the next six years.

Voters approve the funding for multiple years; Town staff review the planned replacements and projects annually; the Selectboard considers the annual updates to the plans at a public hearing, then giving final approval each fall.

You may read about the entire Capital Budget Program here:

<http://colchestervt.gov/320/Approved-Budgets>



Town of Colchester Selectboard Report Fiscal Year 2015-16 Accomplishments

The Town had another exceptional year of holding the line on spending while accomplishing some significant projects that benefit our residents and taxpayers. The following are some highlights of what has happened over the last fiscal year:

- The local option tax was passed by the voters in March of 2015 and is on target in terms of revenue projections. These monies are being used to reduce our debt and lower Town tax rates.
- Major repairs and improvements were made to the Town Meeting House and Historical Society, a new Airport Park Maintenance Facility was constructed and a third floor public meeting space was added to the Town offices on Blakely Road. The latter allows the Burnham Library to use the Town Meeting House for more programming and reduces the operational inefficiency of repeated set-up and tear-down of the space for meetings.
- In response to our residents' request for a better future vision for Malletts Bay, Bayside Park and the Hazelett property, a consulting team assisted us to complete a community-wide survey, recreation needs assessment, and master plans for Bayside Park and the Bayside Hazelett property.
- All records and files for the Planning and Zoning Department were scanned and digitized and are now available to the public on-line.
- The Governance Committee completed a second review of the Town Charter and their recommended changes will be put before the voters for consideration at the 2017 Town Meeting.
- We overhauled our Parks and Traffic Ordinances. Vendors are now allowed in our parks. New user fees and reclaimed fines for traffic violations will expand our revenue base.
- As a first phase to encourage boating visitors to come ashore and support Colchester businesses, a "transient" boat dock and tourist information kiosks were installed at Bayside Park.
- A strategic plan was completed for the Burnham Library and significant outreach efforts to take the library to the community were undertaken.
- The Morehouse Brook Culvert on Malletts Bay Avenue (a 150' long, 6' diameter culvert lying 20' deep and requiring the diversion of a stream and utility line relocations) was designed, permitted and construction begun in this fiscal year.

- Sidewalks were installed on River Road and the East Road Culvert was upgraded.
- Improvements to the Malletts Bay cemetery were completed and plans were made to improve and expand the Fort Ethan Allen and Munson cemeteries. Records are in process of being transferred to online.
- The Planning Commission completed an extensive process to acquire the public's input on the West Lakeshore Drive rezoning.
- A Vermont Community Development Program Grant was awarded to the Town; it leverages over \$15 million in improvements to our largest affordable housing development. The Town will act as grant administrator for rehabilitation of Winchester Place Apartments completed by Champlain Housing Trust.

All of these projects would not have occurred without the hard work and dedication of our staff and volunteer boards. The Town Selectboard thanks each of you for your service.

How to Stay Informed

We get it. You're busy and have more demands on your time than ever. That's why the Town has developed multiple ways for you to keep on top of important Town news and events:

- **On the web** - Our comprehensive website has everything you need to know about the Town. Find news, calendars, forms, an interactive GIS map, and much more at www.colchestervt.gov
- **Notify Me** - Sign up on our website for the news you want most and receive notifications in your email
- **Facebook** - Get the latest scoop and leave us your comments. We love to hear from you!
- **Front Porch Forum** - The Town posts regularly on all the Colchester Neighborhoods and it's free to sign up.
- **The Colchester Sun** - Our local newspaper. Look in the ad section for Town Legal Notices.
- **LCATV** - You can watch Selectboard, Development Review Board, and Planning Commission meetings on Channel 17 or online at www.lcatv.org/towns/colchester
- **Instagram & Twitter** - Keep up with the Parks and Rec Department and share your feedback and photos.
- **Annual Report** - on Town website or pick up at Town Offices and Burnham Library

